

To: School Superintendents  
From: Peter McWalters, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Date: December 17, 2004

Re: School and District Report Cards

Dear Colleagues:

As of today, all 2004 school, district, and state report cards are posted on the RIDE Web site – [www.ridoe.net](http://www.ridoe.net)

A “quick guide” that explains how to read these report cards is also be posted on this site; each report card includes a link to the quick guide and to printing instructions, as well.

Please note that under federal law, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, you are required to disseminate these district and school report cards. The law requires you to “publicly disseminate” these report cards to all schools in your district and “to all parents of students attending these schools” (Sec. 1111 (h)(2)(E)). This dissemination will of course require coordination between your office and your principals.

There are many ways by which you can disseminate these report cards and the “quick guide” to parents, including direct mail or as an enclosure with other mailings from the district. The schools may distribute these district and school report cards along with individual student report cards, as well.

As you know, school districts are responsible for disseminating report cards to all schools served by the district, to all parents of students attending those schools, and to the community, through public means. Guidance from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) says that “LEAs may use their regular method of communicating with parents to meet the dissemination requirement so long as it provides information to all parents.”

Last year, some of you asked me whether it’s sufficient that the cards are posted on the Web site. The answer is no. ED guidance also says that “posting report cards on the Internet alone is not a sufficient means for disseminating” the cards.

Given that each School Report Card is three pages and most District Report Cards are nine pages, I understand the expense that dissemination of printed cards may place on your offices.

You may, therefore, meet the requirements of the law if you and the school principals:

- Notify all parents, through your regular method of communicating, that the cards are posted on line and are available at the school and district offices

- Include in this notification a response form allowing the parents to request that a copy of the cards be mailed to them
- Mail copies of the report cards to all parents who request copies

Please note that to print the report cards you should click on the tab for the “printer friendly” version of each page, and you should follow the “printing instructions” on each page.

When you disseminate these report cards, we encourage you and your principals to write cover letters to accompany these report cards. The cover letters can help parents understand the data and other information contained in the report cards, and the letters can be an opportunity to explain steps each school is taking to meet the state’s performance goals.

We also encourage you to work with your principals to use these report cards during your School Report Nights, which are part of the annual SALT process. These School Report Nights can be an excellent opportunity to discuss the school report cards, to highlight some of the key information, and to respond to inquiries and suggestions from parents and from the school community.

Please file with my office, by January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2005, a report confirming that you have disseminated these report cards and explaining your method of doing so.

During the course of the 2004-05 school year, we will continue to revise and expand the on-line versions of these report cards; the final version of the annual report card will be completed in the spring of 2005. You will be required to disseminate only the preliminary card, however.

We have hired a translator to prepare a Spanish-language version of the template for these report cards. This template will be posted on our Web site as soon as it is available.

We will notify the media that these report cards, including district classifications, have been posted. You may anticipate calls from the media on this topic.

If there is anything that this department can do to help you with this process, or if you have any questions regarding the report cards, you may call Elliot Krieger, in my office, at 222-4600 ext. 2182.

Sincerely,

Peter McWalters  
Commissioner of elementary and secondary education

